787 776 been taken away by the local authorities and sent to the Indians' Affairs Office in San Cristobal.

Life Cycle

842 183 *Pregnancy and Childbirth*

The strongest desire of every Tzeltal couple is to create a numerous family, preferably boys. The relationship between sexual intercourse and pregnancy is well understood among the Indians. They know that pregnancy lasts nine months and they keep a good count of it. On the other hand, there are ideas about the possibility of the woman being influenced by old men or "the owners of the nagual," who can interrupt pregnancy and change the fetus from one woman to another. This is why a woman who thinks she is pregnant for three or four months suddenly realizes that she carries nothing any more, while another one, maybe her neighbor, finds herself in advanced pregnancy, giving birth a few months later. It is to be stressed, however, that these changes can take place only among married women.

843 [833] 843 789

844 [81] In conservative villages (Tenejapa, Oxchuc, Cancuc) there is no professional midwife. Children are delivered by the oldest women in the neighborhood.

[757] [237] When labor begins, the first thing is to give the mother a beverage made of powdered opossum tail dissolved in boiling water. It is very common for Indians to have a dry tail hanging next the fireplace. The woman kneels at labor, facing the midwife. The husband's belt or the woman's rebozo is tied very tightly around the upper part of the abdomen to prevent the child from "going up again." The mother can also help herself by seizing a rope tied to the roof, or taking firm hold of any post of the house. The umbilical cord is chopped with a machete or cut with scissors, supported on an ear of corn. This ear is afterwards used as seed and is considered very fertile.

[241] [824]

[757] When labor has finished, the mother is given another hot beverage of pepper,

[P. 223-B]

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242 *Soil characteristics.* The potential productivity of flat irrigated lands is evaluated on the basis of two criteria: color of the soil and consistency of the soil. The preferred land for cultivation is the black loam mixed with some sand, (*ʔihk'al hiʔiletik lum*). The better, quicker growing corn seed is planted here. These very productive soils are called "hot" lands (*k'ixin lum*). (Heat is associated with fertility in both lands and people: a pregnant woman and her husband are considered to be in a state of heat, and the contrast state of being cold is attributed to someone who is sterile.) The red (*tzab'alum*) yellow (*k'analum*), and white soils (*sak lum*) are poorer soils and the slower seed is planted here. These soils are considered "cold" (*sik*) and are thought to be "tired."

The loss of soil productivity is attributed either to the loss of the soul of the crop or to the fact that the soil gets "tired." Farmers have noticed that in the first five years of planting in Tulanca, the ejido land grant, the soil was "hot" and gave good crops. When this productivity was lost, people said the soul of the crop left. It is considered dangerous to start crops in the lower lands of hot country because when the location of crops is changed, the soul leaves its original residence. The notion of crop soul loss does not conflict with the awareness of natural causes of soil productivity. Fields are left fallow for four or five years when productivity diminishes and the soil is "tired." The irrigated lands are in continuous use because there is some replenishment of fertility with the overflow of the ditch waters. Cattle fertilizers are used sporadically. Those who have many head of cattle construct corrals into which they herd the cattle each night. The location of the corral is changed yearly. Corn and beans are then planted in the old corral with superior results. The dozen or so corrals in the town are owned and worked cooperatively by extended families and are referred to by the Indian patronyms—for example, *skoral Linetik* (corral of the Lins) or *skoral Čailetik* (corral of the Čailes). The one attempt to use commercial fertilizers provided by the Ejido Bank proved a technical success but an administrative failure (chapter 3). Indians noted the increased yields, but none have attempted to purchase fertilizers.

Soil consistency is evaluated on the basis of how easy it is to work. Wet, sticky, or clayey soil (*łučilum*) and stony soil (*kełilum*) are least desirable. Sandy soil is easier to work, but soil productivity depends on a loam

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tion or when the animal is sick. For ceremonial occasions, the assistant of one of the mayordomos is expected to kill the bull which will provide the meat for a common meal. On other occasions, someone who is known to have a hand which gives flavor to the meat is asked to do it. The owner of the animal gives the butcher a half-liter of liquor.

Caponizing is a skill learned by some men with a few head of cattle by watching someone who knows how to perform the operation. If a man's wife is pregnant, he cannot perform the operation himself or even approach the bull, since his glance is very hot and will cause the bull to die. The procedure for making the request and for performing the operation is described below:

The owner goes to speak to one who knows how to caponize. When he arrives at the house of the caponizer, he says, "Are you in, Mam Gomez?" "I am," he replies if he is in. "Come in and sit down," he says.

"Pardon me, I have come to speak to you. Please, for the sake of the Virgin and for the sake of God, will you do nothing more than take out the little scrotum of my bull tomorrow?"

"Yes," replies the caponizer. "Do not worry, I shall take it out tomorrow."

"Good," replies the owner. "I shall wait for you in the house."

The next morning, the caponizer comes. The owner gives him some coffee to drink with a little bread. After they drink, they go to the hills to find the bull. They bring him to a wooded place and tie him by his hind legs to a branch of a tree. They then cast the body on the ground and tie the forelegs to the hind legs with a leather strap. They tie a string around the scrotum and sever the testes. After this, they drink a little. The owner's family joins them. The men blow up the scrotum to make a ball and the children play with it. They cut up the testes and broil them in a pan on the fire. After this is cooked, they pass it out to all of the people present with a tortilla and salt. Two liters of liquor are served. After the common meal, everyone goes to the house of the owner, and there they have a meal of chicken soup with two more liters of liquor. Those who do not drink liquor are served soda.

Very early the next day, the owner goes to see if his bull has died. If he

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Behavior Defined in the Family

Socialization in the family provides the individual with the idiom for behaving in the wider community. The basic principles ordering behavior are respect and obedience toward those who are older, and care for those who are younger. Obedience, expressed by the verb *ʔun* which means both to believe (or to be gullible) and to obey, is instilled by cultivating a sense of fear and shame. Fear is communicated by the parent to the child by invoking evil spirits and by the threat or use of punishment, especially whipping with a leather strap. Shame is aroused by ridicule, jeering, and chastising. A good child is a quiet child; questioning is discouraged either by refusing to answer the child or by telling him to keep quiet. The negative aspect of good behavior is stressed. Significantly, the phrase "Behave yourself!" is translated into Spanish as "Don't do anything!" Good behavior is not rewarded either by praise or by gifts. The only public demonstration of affection toward children I have seen is by grandparents toward grandchildren: an elder might give his sweet roll at a ceremony to his grandchild and even fondle him. Parents show affection to youngsters under three years of age, although the last child may be coddled somewhat longer. Mothers and young children show intimacy and affection in delousing each other or combing each others' hair. Kissing is not a sign of intimacy but of formal respect in ceremonies.

Beliefs concerning conception show awareness of both the male and the female contribution to the fetus. The man's sperm (*snal*) enters the womb, *yoʔtan*, (also the word for heart) and mixes with the woman's flow, to bring about conception. The blood of a child is believed to come from its mother and the skin, bones, and brains from the father. During pregnancy, the father must have intercourse with his wife because his sperm nourishes the fetus. This continues right up to the birth of the child. Men too are believed to have wombs, and some men have trouble with "dropped wombs" caused by lifting heavy burdens.

The only people in attendance at the birth of a child are the women of the immediate household, the mother of the woman giving birth if she is not a part of the houshold, and the midwife. Children are kept out of the

858 mother's womb, and they compete for survival with other small
854 babies who live close by (one of the two is likely to die). They
754 are extremely susceptible to the mal de ojo (evil eye)[1] because their souls are tender, and they are, for the same reason, easy victims of witchcraft exercised against their parents. During the first few months of life, they are protected and cared for with innumerable precautions: they are covered up when strangers enter the house, attended at the slightest sign of distress, and
[313] rarely taken out of the sitio. Until another child is born, they sleep with the parents on the same petate (mat) or bed.

855 When a mother is ready to have a new baby, the younger
262 one is given to an elder sister or grandmother with whom it can sleep. The baby is also weaned at this time. The separation of the child from the mother is an open traumatic experience, and parents admit that children get sick and even die as a result of "jealousy." Nevertheless, no direct attempt is made to smooth the emotional disturbances or the developing sibling rivalry in

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[206] [1]The evil eye has been described innumerable times for
[343] Middle America. In the Chiapas Highlands it is a sickness caused
[241] by a person with strong or "hot" eyes, who looks at the victim. Evil eye "carriers" are not necessarily aware of their power, but some individuals are consciously included in this category: pregnant women, menstruating women, and people with glasses or light eyes, or with very deep set eyes. To avoid giving "mal de ojo," the producer has to touch the person who can be a victim. If a menstruating woman distractedly looks at a small baby, she will immediately put her hand on the baby's forehead, to retrieve from him her power, and not make him sick.

The same procedure of touching the person is done if the other person feels that he is unwillingly "envying" the first one, and can be an unconscious witchcraft mediator. For example, if a married woman without babies sees another woman's baby, she will touch him to show that she is not "envying" the mother, and therefore, there is no danger that she will "steal" the baby's soul or make him sick with her envy.